THE REDBIRD WORD

Volume 100 Issue 7 Celebrating 100 years!

Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Rd., Alton, Ill. 62002, Room B136

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Table of Contents

Takeover
Page 2

Action
Page 3

Love the
Planet
Page 5

Spike
Page 7

ABOUT THE COVER

Sophomore Lillian Henkhaus bunts the ball during a varsity softball game against the East St. Louis Flyers. The Redbirds won 17-2 on March 31.

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@the_dailybird

TAKEOVER

Students Journalists Partner with Community Talk Show

By Keagan Korte, Sports Editor

Riverbender.com's Our Daily Show! with CJ Nasello is being infiltrated by Alton High School's Redbird Word/Daily Bird staff giving them a chance to get experience in local, professional media.

On-air talents include seniors Lily Waltz, Heaven Everage and Kyridas Orr and juniors Juliette Meza and Garrett Stafford. Senior Leigha Cole is the Executive Producer and junior Kolten Clore is the Assistant Producer for the talk show takeover.

"The partnership with Riverbender was supposed to play out as an internship for students to collect hours throughout the whole semester, but wasn't entirely finalized in time," Cole said. "They still wanted to give this opportunity to the students that wouldn't have the chance next year so they turned it into a 'partnership' where we will complete the show during class/on our own time in cooperation with CJ Nasello, the talk show host over at Riverbender.com," Cole added. Participating students brainstormed topics for upcoming show segments and decided on the following with input from Nasello - What's New in Departments, Staff Couples in the District, Hi-Five Friday, Talent Time and Alumni Spotlights.

"Each of them will have their own five-minute segment all put together to make our 30-minute video," Cole said.

Different categories of segments will give viewers a variety of things to look forward to as they watch.

The segment Hi-Five Friday, coordinated by Orr, will feature the varsity baseball team visiting Gilson Brown to hype students up for their day by giving high fives and words of encouragement.

"We've been spending some time brainstorming the development of segment ideas as a group so far," Cole said. Check out future collaborations between the two news outlets later in April on Riverbender.com.

From left, Executive Producer Leigha Cole, Adviser April Gray, on-air talents Kyridas Orr and Lily Waltz and Executive Producer Kolten Clore attend a Zoom meeting with CJ Nasello and multimedia teacher Brian Bergin to discuss segment ideas for the upcoming talk show takeover. *Photo by Keagan Korte, Sports Editor*

THE LOADING DOCK
ON THE RIVER
GRAFTON - ILLINOIS

ACTION!

Students Take the Stage to 'Seize the Day'

By Inci Kantar, Features Reporter

Alton High School will present its spring musical, Disney's "Newsies," a lively and emotional story inspired by the real-life Newsboys' Strike of 1899. Set in New York City, the musical follows a group of young newspaper sellers, known as newsies, who band together to protest unfair price increases imposed by powerful publishers.

Performances will take place in the Alton High School auditorium on April 23-24 at 7 p.m. and April 25 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The production features a diverse cast of characters whose personalities bring humor, heart and energy to the stage while the show captures the struggles of the newsies and their fight for justice. It also highlights themes of friendship, resilience and unity. Audiences can expect moments of laughter, emotional depth and a touch of romance between the two lead characters Jack Kelly and Katherine Plumber.

Freshman Elias Meydam stars as Jack Kelly, the determined and charismatic leader of the newsies. As the oldest of the group, Jack serves as a protective and inspiring figure.

"The high school musical feels a lot more professional than middle school," Meydam said. "Getting the role of Jack was very shocking. I did my best and I'm happy I got the part."

Meydam previously played Willy Wonka in Alton Middle School's 2025 production and is eager to bring another leading role to life.

Senior Kenlea Jamison plays Katherine Plumber, a driven and intelligent reporter for the New York Sun. Throughout the show, Katherine develops greater empathy and confidence as she navigates both her career and her personal identity. Jamison has prior experience in leading roles including Alton High School's 2024 production of "Annie."

Director Anne Davis expressed enthusiasm about this year's production and the opportunity to work with new students.

"I am very excited," Davis said. "I have a lot of new students I haven't worked with before. They are excited, fun to work with and already doing a great job."

Davis also described the process of preparing the show.

"Putting on a production takes a lot of effort. We start with the big picture and then add the details," she said. "Students in the musical, orchestra and students helping build the set are working very hard. About two weeks before opening night, everything starts to fall into place."

Vocal coach and choir teacher Leah Galbraith praised the students' dedication despite a shorter rehearsal schedule.

"The students are doing a great job practicing on their own, especially with the music," Galbraith said. "Overall, there is a lot of talent, and Ms. Davis did an excellent job casting."

As opening night approaches, both staff and students are optimistic about the final result.

Alton High School invites the community to attend "Newsies," support student performers and enjoy an entertaining production. Tickets will be available for purchase starting April 3. Prices are $12 for adults and $5 for students and children. For the matinee, all tickets will be $5.

Director Anne Davis goes over the script with the cast of "Newsies."
Photo by Inci Kantar, Reporter

The cast of 'Newsies' talks before a rehearsal.
Photo by Corey Campbell

HEAD START

Courses Prepare Students for the Future

By Max Laird, Reporter

High school students are often confused, concerned and nervous about their first job. Alton High has implemented multiple classes, such as Career Exploration and JOB O, to help students find jobs and make the process of it all less stressful.

Students are required to take a class called Career Exploration taught by Chris Petrea. This can either be taken in the student's freshman or sophomore year. The other class, that isn't required but many students do take in order to better prepare themselves, is called JOB O and taught by Lori Palmer.

Most people, when they get a job, are extremely unprepared. JOB O helps students learn more about the logistics of a job.

"They already know how to interview, fill out a resume, check their paycheck to make sure that they are getting paid appropriately," Palmer said. "They are more comfortable dealing with their coworkers and managers as well."

Career Exploration introduces students to the work force by opening them up to many tasks and activities that will help them. They do one-on-one with their peers and learn how to fill out papers that are required when applying for jobs.

"We do many things in preparation for students to make the job process easier," Petrea said. "They go through anything from job applications, interviews, resumes, cover letters, students even do one-on-one interviews with their peers."

People often think that the most mportant aspect that will lead to someone getting a job is their resume, their intelligence or even their experience. Most people don't even think about networking, asking around and knowing people are some of the most important aspects.

"Networking is the most essential part of getting a job," Palmer said. "Knowing people, talking and asking around is so important."

Lots of students avoid getting a job so that they can hang out with their friends or family and spend time with them because of the fear they have of missing events.

"The hardest part of getting a summer job is the FOMO[[fear of missing out]," Palmer said. "They're scared of missing out on events."

Many challenges are faced when people get their first job. A lot of those challenges may cause or influence workers to quit or resign from their jobs. With these challenges comes rewards and lessons learned for those that stayed.

"For most students, the most rewarding part of a job is the paycheck," Palmer said. "Most of my students would probably say that it is the paycheck, but it's also rewarding when they finish a shift and walk out and see the work they have done."

Acquiring a job after high school can be a challenging road, though knowing the essentials can steer students to a clearer path. So, take advantage of the work related courses offered to strive.

How to Prepare for a
Summer Job
1
Classes
There are many classes that students can take. They can take classes in their school. They can join programs. They can even take classes run outside of the school.
2
Details
Many people don't pay attention to the fine details when it comes to the job process. They just set up a resume, go to the interview and maybe send a follow up note. Lots of managers will look at how you write, how you speak, walk and talk.
3
Strengths
Learn what you are good at and use that to your ability. Make your future employer see the strengths and plan around them.
4
Weaknesses
Don't be afraid of your weaknesses. Work at them. Learn what you're not good at and try to build off them. Try to be the best you th
at you can be.
5
Confidence.
Confidence is always key. Employers are looking at the way you carry yourself. They inspect the way that you view yourself and if you respect yourself or not.

LOVE THE

Members of AFJROTC empty the recycling bin in the school library.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Editor-Chief

Students Participate in Programs to Create Change

By Kaylee Chinchilla, Features Reporter

Senior Jack Puent measures the height of a plant for Growing Beyond Earth club.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Editor-in-Chief

Members of AFJROTC empty classroom recycling bins after school.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Editor-in-Chief

At Alton High School there are many organizations that help protect the Earth. For example, AFJ ROTC has been collecting recycling from classrooms every week on Thursdays to reduce waste.

Senior Master Sergeant Katie Rosenbeck runs the recycling program after it got passed down to her.

"The junior ROTC has been supporting the recycling program for the last few years here," Rosenbeck said. "We recycle cans and bottles and at the beginning of every year we offer teachers an opportunity to have a recycling bin in their room."

The program helps students feel they are making a difference in the environment and doing something positive for the school.

"I can tell you they take a lot of pride in owning the program and doing the recycling, and with that we've been looking into other opportunities to kind of work with it in the next coming year," Rosenbeck said.

Junior ROTC puts in a lot of time and effort into collecting the recycling from each classroom, adding an extra 30 to 40 minutes to their school day once a week.

"That's just the weekly cleanup,," Rosenbeck said. "At the beginning and end of the year it takes us a considerable amount of time because we have to prep all the containers and then we clean them."

Just like the recycling program, another organization that strives to help the environment is the new Revive club. This club is a new addition to the many clubs the school offers, with the help of one student's suggestion.

3 FUN FACTS ABOUT EARTH DAY

1. More than 20 million people participated in the first Earth Day.
2. Earth Day went global in 1990.
3. Tens of millions of trees have been planted on Earth Day.

PLANET

"Revive club is a group of students that want to make a difference with paper recycling, reducing waste in the cafeteria, possibly composting and gardening," Career and Technical Education teacher Scott Vernum said.

The club took about a month to fully get started, from the time sophomore Amelia Friedman approached Vernum about the idea until the time assistant principal Kate Page approved it.

"It was over Christmas break. I was watching my own family and how much we waste and consume, and also consumerism and how it's so big in our country and just in our world in general," Friedman said.

"I made up a food proposal idea for Alton High School. I sent it to my social worker, and I contacted a lot of people. Mr. Vernum being one of them so he said I should just make a club," Friedman added.

A multi-purpose club such as Revive club helps to make an impact. Students are trying to reduce food waste by taking leftover food from the school's cafeteria to somewhere or someone who needs it.

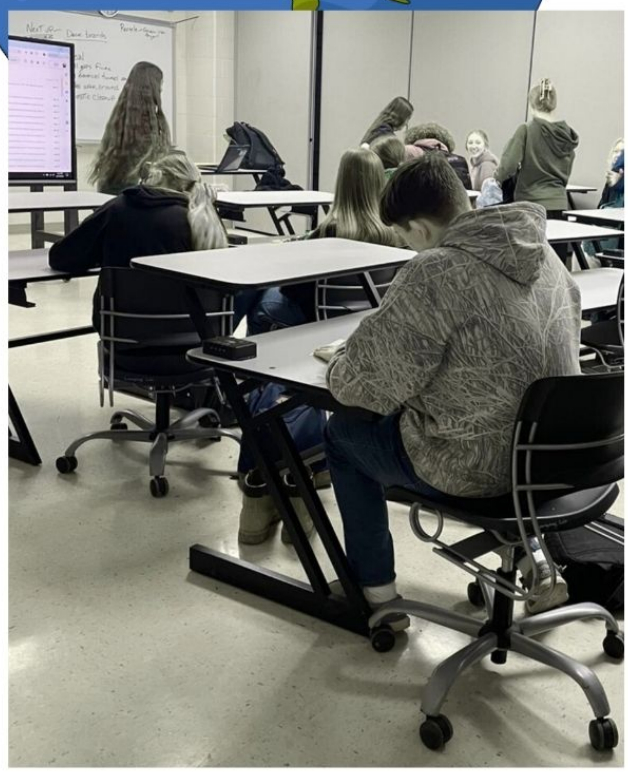
"The purpose is to try to reduce how much food waste comes from the school and divert it from landfills," Vernum said. "We want to try to make a difference as far as how much food gets thrown away."

Like any other club, Revive club needs help and support to be able to get projects going.

"You can join the club by talking to Mr. Vernum, or if you see me in the halls and talk to me about joining the club, I can just add you in," Friedman said.

Friedman encourages students who are involved in other activities to still come join the club.

"Another thing people have is sports or other clubs, but even if you are in that stuff, you can still join. The biggest thing we need right now is just support," Friedman said.



Sophomore Amelia Freidman prepares to start a meeting of Revive club in Scott Vernum's classroom after school.
Photo by Kaylee Chinchilla

Juniors Alyssa Watson-Duey and Stella Mathews record data for Growing Beyond Earth club.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Editor-in-Chief

Boys Serve up Hope for a Successful Season

By Joshua Lumpkins, Reporter

The Alton boys' volleyball team is getting ready for an exciting new season as practices get started and players return to the court with a new perspective. After months of offseason training and open gym, the time has finally come for them to show their talent.

Last year, the team finished with a record of 8-20. The record shows that season was clearly tough and challenging. They struggled to find consistency on both the offensive and defensive side which made it difficult for them to compete against other teams. Despite the losses the season provided valuable lessons and experience that the team can build off of and come back stronger.

The team focuses on building chemistry and setting the tone for a great year. Coaches have emphasized discipline, communication and teamwork as key areas of focus, knowing these elements will be crucial in close matches.

"During the season, we do different drills to help us build team chemistry and communication off the court," Head Coach Jennifer Schiber said.

This season brings the experience of upperclassmen and promising newcomers, creating a roster with both leadership and fresh talent. Older players are stepping into their role of helping the younger players get ready for the fast pace of the varsity level and to teach them the important skills of the game.

"Some important skills you need to have is volleyball IQ, being able to block and hit," junior starter Britton Clayton said.

In the end, the Alton boys' volleyball team enters the new season with determination and a clear head. With lessons learned from last season they want to come back and focus on team work and to get better all together. The team is ready to take on the challenges ahead and ready to show the community how hard they've been working. Visit altonathletics.org to find their upcoming games and latest record.

Upcoming Varsity Volleyball Games

04/10 - 6:15 p.m.	vs Bunker Hill High School @ Bunker Hill High School
04/14 - 5:45 p.m.	vs Belleville East High School @ Belleville East High School
04/15 - 5:45 p.m.	vs Father McGivney @ Alton High School

SPIKE!

Senior Dayshawn Miller gets ready to spike a volleyball during a practice to prepare for upcoming games. *Photo by Raye Holmes*

Sophomore Gabby Terrell gets ready for her teammate to throw the ball during a game against the East St. Louis Flyers on March 31.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Editor-in-Chief

Lady Redbirds Swing into New Season

By Eliza Clark, Reporter

As the new season gets rolling, the Redbirds' softball team is preparing for a competitive year built on teamwork, strong leadership and determination to improve on last season's performance. They are working hard to have a better season this year.

Senior players and coaches say the team has been working hard in the offseason to develop skills and strengthen team chemistry. With a mix of experienced seniors and younger players joining the roster, the Redbirds are focused on working together and staying motivated throughout the season.

"We are trying to come together as a unit to win as many games as possible while also staying together as a team," sophomore Gabby Terrell said.

Terrell's statement reflects the team's determination to work together through this season. The Redbirds finished last season with valuable experience that players say will help them improve this year. The team hopes to build on those lessons as they face challenging opponents throughout this year's softball season.

With important games coming up and a season full of opportunities ahead, the Redbirds are ready to step onto the field and prove that dedication, teamwork and preparation can lead to success. Throughout preseason practices, the team has been focusing on strengthening fundamentals including fielding, hitting and communication on the field. Practices have also included conditioning and team building activities to help players stay focused and support one another throughout the season.

Team leaders are working to set a positive example for younger teammates by maintaining strong work habits and encouraging everyone to stay confident and motivated. The key players to watch this season, according to Terrell, are sophomore Lilly Henkhaus and senior Lacey Fisher. By building trust and improving communication, the team hopes to create a supportive environment where every player feels prepared to contribute.

As the season begins, the Redbirds aim to continue improving with each game. With hard work, commitment, and a focus on teamwork, the players hope to compete strongly against their opponents and make this season one of growth and achievement for the program.

Sophomore Sydney Moore fields the ball while warming up for a game against the East St. Louis Flyers on March 31.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Editor-in-Chief

CATCH

Reinhardt Gears Up for a Successful Season

By Byron Williams, News Editor

Assistant football coach Jaxson Karnoski demonstrates a drill for football players at an after-school weightlifting practice to prepare players for the upcoming season.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Editor-in-Chief

After three years of being a head coach at Alton High School, Cody Markel resigned and Rick Reinhardt saw an opportunity that he took. Reinhardt began his coaching career at Mascoutah in 1975 and stayed there for three seasons. Then he continued to coach at Fairfield for 11 seasons straight.

Following the 11-year coaching term at Fairfield, Reinhardt began coaching at Civic Memorial High School in Bethalto, Ill. During this time, Reinhardt made it to the playoffs eight times. After coaching Civic Memorial, Reinhardt coached the Collinsville Kahoks for three seasons. After those three seasons Reinhardt made the announcement of his first retirement. According to Maxpreps.com, not too long after retirement, Reinhardt went back to coaching at Civic Memorial in 2022.

"It's been a great experience," Reinhardt said. "The difference between a small-town football team is special because it's often the heartbeat of the community and everyone rallies around it. However in larger schools, there are more students and more opportunities. But at the end of the day, it's all relative."

During the 2025-26 football season, Reinhardt became an assistant coach at Alton High School.

While last season wasn't ideal with the record of zero wins and nine losses in the conference, Reinhardt has plans for this upcoming season.

"It's an exciting challenge," Reinhardt said. "It's a challenge I want to embrace. We have athletes here, and while last year was tough in many ways, I believe strongly in what we can build."

The expectations this year have changed under the leadership of Reinhardt. He wants to hold the same goals he's had for the last 50 years – to have a competitive team and make the playoffs.

"One, I want to compete to win the conference," Reinhardt said. "Two, I want to qualify for the playoffs. With the current playoff system, we have an opportunity to reach that goal, and I believe our staff gives us a real chance."

As the season approaches, the focus at Alton is no longer on last year's struggles, but on the foundation being built now. With decades of experience Reinhardt is working to build confidence, discipline and belief in his players. As of right now, the Redbird football players are currently doing weightlifting three days a week after school. Reinhardt is also planning to host a summer football camp.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Stronger Minds, Healthier Lives: The Value of Student Volunteering

By Juliette Meza, Editor-in-Chief

High school is often defined by what we do academically – the tests we pass, the essays we write and the GPA we acquire. But an education that stops after we leave school grounds is incomplete. Making volunteerism a graduation requirement ensures that students leave high school with a sense of duty to their community.

Beyond fulfilling a graduation requirement, doing community service can heighten a student's personal health and future success. Research from JAMA Network Open shows volunteering was associated with smaller behavioral problems in adolescents. Additionally, high school students who volunteer are 42% more likely to report feeling excellent in health. This feeling is backed by biology, as acts of kindness release dopamine and serotonin, naturally reducing stress levels.

Adding on to the health benefits, it also fosters empathy and a stronger sense of purpose, allowing students to feel more connected to their communities. Altogether, these benefits show that volunteering is not just an obligation, but a powerful tool for personal growth and long-term success.

Going beyond classrooms and personal bubbles by volunteering can contribute to forming new connections with a variety of people in the community.

Research reported by the Red Cross showed that 85% of young people surveyed said that volunteering helped build meaningful connections and developed new friendships. Students were able to start conversations and bond easier. By making these connections a requirement, it ensures students have relationships outside of school.

While the word "volunteer" implies a choice, this argument overlooks that high school is designed to expose students to life experiences that students might not choose for themselves. Classes like algebra increase critical thinking and are required for graduation; volunteering is no different. It acts as personal development for students. When done correctly, this requirement isn't a burden, but a baseline of contribution to the community.

To truly prepare students for life after high school, volunteer work is essential to having more than just academic knowledge after graduation. Students can have a strong connection with the community, a higher level of empathy and real world experience. Students will be shaped by their drive to help others and become more socially responsible graduates whose success is not just academic, but their impact on others.

Volunteer Opportunities within Alton, Ill. and Godfrey, Ill.

Boys & Girls Club of Alton

2512 Amelia St., Alton, Ill. 62002
(618) 462-6249

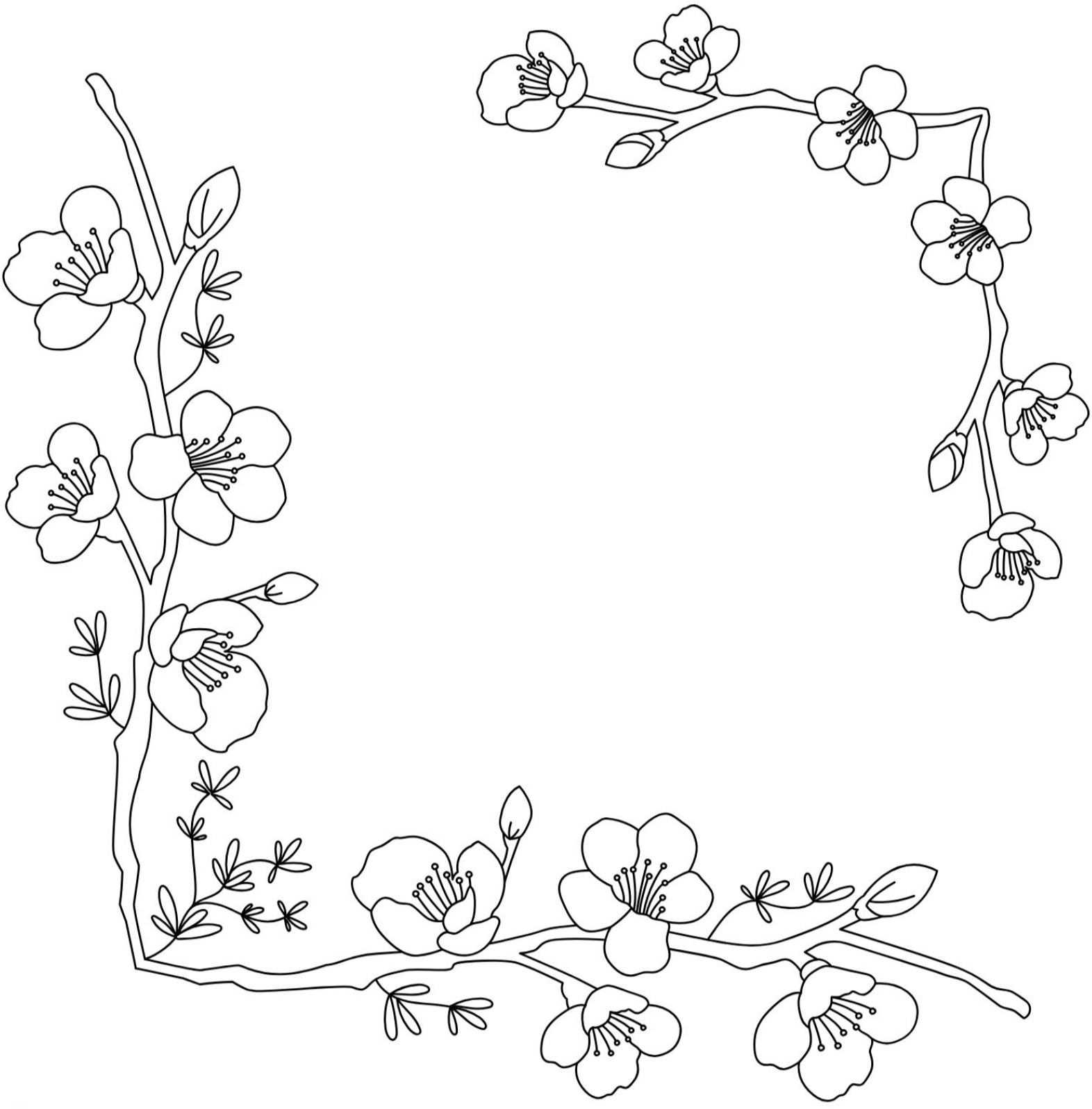
The Nature Institute

2213 S. Levis Ln., Godfrey, Ill. 62035
(618) 466-9930

Riverbend Head Start

550 Landmarks Blvd. 3rd fl,
Alton, IL 62002
(618) 463-5946

OPINION

Check out our online content!

The Redbird Word is hosting a coloring contest for a chance to win a $20 Visa gift card! To be entered in the drawing, create your best spring scene in the frame below and submit it to B136 by April 17!